# How Santa Came to Tots of France Last Year

***Dr. Esther C. Lovejoy Tells of Joyous Visit of the Old Saint Upon Suffering Children Behind the Battle Front. The First Good News of the Holiday Season, That Jerusalem Was in the Hands of the Allies.***

DISTRIBUTING CLOTHING TO REFUGEE CHILDREN AT TOUL.

IN June, 1917, two months after this country entered the war, the woman's committee of the Council of National Defense held a meeting of representatives of every national woman's organization in this country. It was a historic meeting, although it went almost unheralded, for the representatives of some seven million American women who had prepared themselves for war work came from every corner of the country to Washington to tell the woman's committee what they had planned to do in the interest of the great cause, and to help one another by mutual conference and co-operation.

One of the most impressive speakers at that meeting was a young woman from Portland, Ore., Dr. Esther C. Lovejoy, who came as the representative of the Medical Woman's National Association with authority to go to France in the interest of the association, to learn what that body of woman doctors might do to help the suffering children. So moved was the meeting by the words of this earnest young woman that the delegates of the other organizations present not only indorsed the mission of the Oregon woman, but passed a resolution requesting the Red Cross to send Dr. Lovejoy in the broader capacity of a physician under its organization.

This is how it came that Dr. Lovejoy in August of last year went to France, serving the American Red Cross in its children's department in different parts of the country. There she remained, carrying on her work of mercy at the Lorraine front, at Toul,

DR. ESTHER C. LOVEJOY.

Nancy and many other towns in that war-stricken region where the American Red Cross has a chain of dispensaries for children as well as for older people. In these and through these, as well as by means of her own splendid initiative and efficiency, Dr. Lovejoy brought back health and happiness to many thousands of France's stricken children.

There was a reason for the confidence and enthusiasm inspired by this young woman, aside from her magnetic personality. She is the only woman who has headed the health department of a large American city. Before going to France she was director of the health bureau of the city of Portland, Ore., inaugurating reforms that have been copied throughout the United States. She is also an expert in treating babies, and in this connection she went to Alaska and served for a time in a meningitis hospital. After a full year's service in France, where she ministered to thousands of children and their mothers, she is again in the United States, speaking for the work of the American Red Cross in France. She says:

"If I can make the people understand one-half of what has gone on over there, of the suffering, misery and martyrdom which I have seen with my own eyes, if I can make the people realize that their help is yet needed to bring happiness and health to widows and orphans, I should feel that my mission is fulfilled. The people of America do not realize what the situation is or the wonderful opportunity for service the Red Cross still has before it in the newly freed land.

"One of the most pathetic things I saw in France was the reluctance of some of the people to leave their shattered homes. There are today old men, women and even children clinging to the debris, terrorized by the horrors of war, afraid to try to make a new start elsewhere. They lived in dugouts under the wreckage of the homes they once loved. The tourists of tomorrow who go over to see where the battles were fought will still see how those people tilled their fields right up to the battle lines, working mostly by night. The American Red Cross still gives them food and clothing. Today there are over six hundred ruined French villages. Can you imagine the widow of a soldier going out at night with a gas mask to plow and sow the fields? That is what I saw thousands of heroic women doing in France.

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"I have seen thousands and thousands of homeless children," continued Dr. Lovejoy. "The American Red Cross is taking care of 200,000 of them, saving them for the upbuilding of the future generations of France. With the blessed season of peace before us, I must tell you something of how we brought Christmas to some of those little children of France last year.

"Christmas day had been dreary in the earthet-Moselle in the years 1914, 1915 and 1916. As a matter of fact, there had been no Christmases during those years. The twenty-fifth of December had been just like any other cold winter day where food and clothing are scarce.

"No, the Christmas spirit was not dead, but its manifestations had been inhibited by the Germans. 'Merry Christmas' was a mockery; 'peace on earth, good will to men,' an altruistic dream. And good things to eat on Christmas day belonged to an age before the invasion of the Hun.

"But strange things had happened during the year 1917. These things made Christmas miracles possible and the performances of Santa Claus look easy. A far country had come into the war, a country which lay across the ocean, where the boches could not reach it. A sector called the American sector, only a few kilometers away from Toul and Nancy, was under the command of this new army.

"The French women and children looked on the newcomers with interest. They learned that troops of these strange soldiers were seen on the march. They observed that they wore khaki uniforms like the English. The poilus had received them like brothers. They had embraced them.

"The American Red Cross had come before the Army. It had opened a home and hospital at the Caserne du Luxemburg, near Toul, and hundreds of little children from near the front had warm clothing and good food, and they did not need to wear gas masks there. American infirmaries marked with the big red cross had been opened in the small towns near Toul and Nancy. Many children went to these infirmaries, whether they were sick or not. They were pleasant places to spend an afternoon, much better than the abri.

"From the military standpoint there was no occasion for Christmas rejoicing. Russia had gone to pieces and Italy had suffered a crushing defeat. The United States was yet an unknown quantity on the other side of the submarine, and there were many disquieting rumors regarding a new supersubmarine, a Norse bugaboo, as dark, treacherous and terrible as the fathomless caves of the sea.

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"But somehow Christmas was in the air. Something was felt to be stirring. There were unusual signs and hopeful indications in the land. Toys had been seen at Place Stanislas, at Nancy, and at the Caserne at Toul. The children were all agog. It was rumored that the American Red Cross was planning a Christmas with real Christmas trees and stockings full of things for the 25th day of December, 1917.

"It was during this Christmas month, at the very darkest hour, that the star of the allies rose in the east. Jerusalem was taken by the British forces. This gave no great military advantage, but it seemed to us that if ever there were divine sign given to men to uphold their faith at a time of need, the giving of the Holy City into the keeping of the allies was a sign from God Himself that He was on our side.

"I shall never forget the morning when the news came into Nancy. Our Red Cross camionette was standing in front of the American Fund for French Wounded. It was the only sign of life in the Place Stanislas, that magnificent square that teemed with life before the war and looked like a tombless cemetery afterward. A boche plane which had been brought down a few days before was lying beside the central monument. It was a sorry wreck, the deadest thing in that dead square. It looked like a great bird that had just been killed. Its body was crushed, its wings were broken and a tangle of fine wires connected its different parts as though the sensitive fibers from its spinal cords, torn from their sheaths, still held to the lacerated surface tissues.

"The black German war cross painted on the green wing of that mechanical corpse fascinated me. I had not realized before that the sacred cross of St. John of Jerusalem had been misappropriated by Germany as its distinguishing emblem. It was the cross of the hospitallers, the cross of mercy which had been painted on that merciless bombing plane, and I was wondering at the strange violation of the fitness of things when the girls came out to the camionette and called me. The mail had arrived. The English daily paper printed in Paris was opened, and there on the front page was the thrilling headline, 'Jerusalem has fallen!'

"'Jerusalem has risen!' we translated it. After a thousand years of occupation by the Turks, the Holy City had been given into the hands of the allies. With that news the morale of our camionette rose to 100 per cent plus and kept mounting upward as we skidded along toward Pont-a-Mousson, where a Red Cross dispensary was located within a stone's throw of the trenches.

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"Our camionette was camouflaged in the green, russet and gray shades of the autumn landscape and we did not change color gradually with the seasons like the animals that depend on this subterfuge of nature for survival. Paint was scarce. A passing airman would have spotted us instantly and smiled at the spectacle of a moving object that looked like a stray section of a bosky dell gliding swiftly over the white expanse of that snow-covered country.

"But we were not worrying about airmen. We were rejoicing in the good news and discussing the plans for Christmas—the first Christmas after the taking of Jerusalem—and breaking spontaneously into the 'Holy City' every few minutes. We couldn't remember all the words of the anthem, but those we remembered must have been inspired for the day of deliverance.

"Passing through Pompey, one of those border towns, we noticed a crowd of women and children and old men following after a very active, strong-lunged cripple, who was yelling some sort of information at the top of his voice. His message was causing unusual excitement. Our first thought was of bombs and shells, and we involuntarily looked around for an abri. A moment later, however, we learned that it was our advance agent, the town crier, officially informing the people that the American Red Cross was to open a dispensary in that town on the following day.

"It is impossible to imagine the monotony of existence in many of those towns. The tragic routine was maddening. The inhuman order of things was more than a normal human being was created to endure. It is easy to think of men engaged in battle. This is history repeating itself, but it is hard to visualize little children, whose ears are trained for the sounds of war, catching the hum of the Hun and ducking into the nearest abri, like so many chickens, when the hawk is on the wing.

"Among the patients on the opening day was a little mother of eleven years, with a flock that the war had left in her care. She was not a child. Responsibility had made her a woman prematurely. Her mother worked in a munition factory and she kept house and cared for her three brothers and sisters. Our work for the day was over, but none of the children had gone. They were whispering eagerly together and shooting shy, appealing glances in our direction. Something of great moment was brewing. The little mother seemed to be the recognized leader among the group, and just as we were leaving she stepped forward as spokesman for the flock. She said that they had heard that the American Red Cross was planning a Christmas and they wanted to know if it would reach as far as their town.

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"With fifty pairs of hungry eyes fixed upon the doctor, there was only one thing for her to say. The American Red Cross would not forget that little town. And that settled it. Christmas trees at Nancy and Toul were easy, but the promise made to the children of that outlying town brought to mind the little dispensary friends in the other towns. What was to be done for them?

"There was one solution of the difficulty—a solution the Red Cross had applied to many other problems. There were mobile canteens, mobile baths, mobile dispensaries, mobile dental clinics, why not have a mobile Christmas tree? The American Red Cross, the American Fund for French Wounded and the weather co-operated in the plan, which eventually proved a great success.

"A motor car and tender big enough to carry a Christmas tree and six sets of presents were secured and camouflaged in such a way that a boche airman, looking down from the clouds, would surely have mistaken it for the equipage of Santa Claus himself. No Christmas tree in the world ever had such a setting. The scene painters and stage carpenters had been busy behind the battle line along the Lorraine front. The roads were screened with slimy draperies that waved in thin air like floating, unsubstantial clouds concealing military movements from the falcon of the enemy. The whole country was bristling with arms, but, viewed from above, it was literally a picture of rustic innocence.

"There had been a light fall of snow, followed by a drizzling rain from a warmer stratum, and this had frozen, drop by drop, as it reached the earth. The country was white, the trees were crystallized and glistening pendants hung from every twig; the wire entanglements which covered the fields like briers in some places were heavy with icicles, and even the crosses on the soldiers' graves along the way were decorated in this manner for the occasion.

"On this dazzling Christmas morning the Red Cross turnout moved along the highways from town to town, bearing gifts and honking 'Merry Christmas' and glad tidings of great joy. The children were waiting at each dispensary, and some of them, led by their teachers, sang Christmas carols. They made a brave showing, and their sweet, piping voices sounded strange in the land where the air was so often rent by the hoarse Valkyrie calls of 'Big Bertha' leading the furious hosts.

"It was a Christmas such as I shall never forget. The little ones seemed incredibly happy with their presents of warm clothing and stockings full of toys, fruit and confections. The Hun, who had out-Heroded Herod, was forgotten. The star of the allies had arisen in the east. The American Red Cross was keeping Christmas behind the American sector in the Meurthe-et-Moselle, and at a certain dispensary there stood a little mother with a new-fledged flock and the smile in her eyes saw hope renewed."

# Around the City.

TWO men stood on the pavement at the foot of the House office steps. The only difference noticeable between them was that the one who was gray-haired stood uncovered while the younger man's outstretched arm on the step railing showed that he was impatient to be on his way.

There was nothing shabby about the man who held his hat while he talked. His tie was dignity expressed in a butterdy of black silk, his collar was as white as a laundry could make it and his clothes were of a sort that nobody ever notices, which means that they were all right—but:

In his eyes was the cowed expression that comes from being the under dog in life's tussle, and his voice was a quaver of emotion, as he pleaded for some favor wanted, or, maybe, returned thanks for one already conferred.

That's all—only: What possible circumstance of class, social, political or financial, could excuse a man for permitting another man, especially old enough to be his father, to stand before him uncovered like a vassal before a king in a town where there are neither kings nor vassals?

Answer me that.

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AN ancient black man was dragging a stiff foot along a path in a park. A woman was rounding a big cedar bush—and this is the result:

"S'cuse me, lady, but don't this here signbode read, 'Keep offn' the grass'?"

Lady admitted that it did.

"Yessum. And don't the sign over the river say, 'Keep to de right an' walk yo' hawses over the breedge'?"

This statement was also confirmed.

"Yessum. An' the signbode on a gentman's fahm say, 'No trapesin'; an' de one by de tracks say, 'Look out for the cyahs?' Ain't dat a fac', lady?"

Lady said it was. She said it in the friendliest way she knew how for two reasons—one being that she knew a little story when it came her way.

"Yessum. An' the signbodes where they's buildin' houses says, 'No admerssion; an' dem kyards on de 'flicted men's hats reads, 'Please hep de bline'—ain't I c'rec, lady?"

Lady assured him that he couldn't possible be c'rector.

"Yessum. I don't know nair letter in de book, but I reads my titles clar, like de Bible says we mus'; an' I reads 'em thoo an' thoo. Whuffo, I benner steddyin' this here signbode. Anni makes it out that this here guv'ment c'n make folks keep offn' the grass, but it ain't got no holt on Gawd. Effn' I was to tip-toe onto this here grass I'd be 'reated an' jes' natchally took an' jailed. But the guv'ment kain't keep the leaves from fallin' over whicherway they wanter, an' the snow, too, when it comes. Ain't I right, lady?

"An'furthermo', the guv'ment haster hiah men to sweep offn' the leaves an' snow; an' that's one of the Hebenly Fawther's ways of takin' care of He all's po'—yessum."

There wasn't a peg to hang an argument on, so the woman just waited until the ancient man shifted from the good Lord's affairs to his own:

"I ben in the hawspital with this misery in my laig jints till I kain't do nothing but crawl along like a scotched snake. 'Pears likter I ain't gwine to be strong enough to hannle mah job agin; an' mah wife 'lows that while she c'n keep me from starvin', there ain't nair coppah of her wash money gwine up in smoke, no, indeedy.

"An' I suttinly do miss mah t'baccy—thanky, chile, thanky—I gwine git me a little twis an'—yessum. I allers trusses in the Lawd an' I reads mah titles clar."

Charity? You bet it wasn't charity. It was simply pay for a bit of a glimpse into the heart and brain of a fast-going type like this.

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THE war brought to Washington one critic who took home with him an opinion which he voiced to a porter who was helping him wait for his train:

"There's a lot of splendid trees out at Arlington—magnificent trees that would be worth thousands of dollars if sawed and split. The government ought to make money on that timber instead of letting it go to waste, and give the cemetery more room to breathe in."

It was a perfectly sensible opinion from the viewpoint of the west, where a native chokes unless he owns a whole prairie full of air and where saw mills are forever hungry for planks, shingles and ties. He was probably just as patriotic as the sentimentalist who sees in each oak at Arlington a sylvan sentinel guarding the nation's dead. It was simply that he was different—and we all know that variety is the spice of life.

"And look at all this ground lying idle! Why, sir, waste land enough around this depot to apply free potatoes to every poor family in your town. Let me tell you, you have got a valuable grain belt right under the Capitol's nose, sir, and you don't seem to know it!"

Then the train for the west chocchooed under the umbrella shed, and that was all there was to that.

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YOU mustn't call it a larch.

It looks like a larch, but it isn't. It is an India pine. A gardener says so. And he knows.

The woman who asked about it thought she knew, too—women have such curious notions sometimes. In her daily goings and comings through the government grounds (no use owning up to how many years; dates are so depressing) she fancied she knew every tree and bush along the way. The Christthorn, with its cruel sharp spines; the gnarled old Judas tree, forever in the grip of remorse; the copper beeches, dancing like front-row chorus girls; the Chinese—oh, all of them! But it seems she didn't know a single solitary thing about larches. For the wise man told her:

"It looks like a larch, madam, but it is a native of the Himalayas and is known as the India pine."

And when you come down to it, a larch—just a quiet lady-like English larch—is not half as excitingly attractive as a pine whose ancestors have shaded mahatmas and yogas and things like that.

So if you should be interested in tree-folk, don't forget that one larch in this town, anyhow, is an India pine.

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A MAN whose face showed for the wear and tear of minding everybody's business—except, possibly, his own—was protesting the spineless attitude of this country to an every-day-looking woman as they stood together on the Rock Creek bridge.

"Here's another sickening evidence of our everlasting todyism to the British lion—four on this bridge, another herd down on the Grant monument; two on guard at the Corcoran Gallery——"

"Only one."

"What's the matter with you? Two."

"One."

"Two, I tell you—one guarding each side of the entrance——"

"Two lions, all right, but only one on guard. The other one is asleep."

And if you had been near enough to overhear them, you would have wondered how a man so weighted with the shortcomings of a nation could put up with a plain, jolly woman like that."

Or how she could put up with him.

NANNIE LANCASTER.